

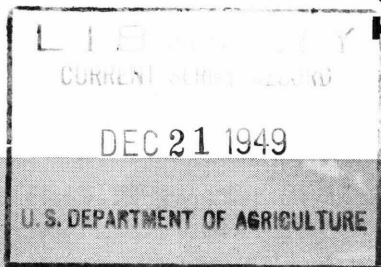
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RURAL

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FARMERS' BULLETIN NO. 1847

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

RURAL PEOPLE, like others, want to use good books for many reasons—to learn to do better what they are already doing, to learn new things, to follow current events intelligently, to find relaxation, or to develop their understanding generally. Through books they can and do accomplish all these aims.

Rural schools need many more books than they can afford to buy in order to supplement modern methods of teaching and to interest and stimulate the pupils.

Many agencies among the people are helping to make public-library service available in various ways to rural people and rural schools. Little branch collections of books that are changed from time to time by volumes sent out from the county or regional library headquarters sometimes do the work. To other places a librarian comes with a bookmobile at stated times, lending books to country people, answering their questions, and helping them to make good selections.

But more than 35 million rural Americans still lack local public-library service. Believing that access to good reading materials is essential to rural progress, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics asked the American Library Association to cooperate in the preparation of this bulletin, which describes some of the rural library services now at work and suggests how rural communities and farm families who are without such services can help get them for their people. That Association also cooperated in making the revision.

Washington, D. C.

Issued February 1940
Revised April 1949

RURAL LIBRARY SERVICE¹

Prepared in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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NEIGHBORS, both old and young, take to the new books in the little mountain cabin as ducks take to a pond. It is the first time they have ever had a library service near at hand. A friendly mountaineer uses his living room as a station for books that come by bookmobile from the central library at the county seat. Young men out of work, older people living with their children, young couples just starting out, men and women trying to fill gaps in their early education or to keep abreast of the rapidly changing economic and social scene—all these look upon this new library collection as the best thing that has ever come to this hilly country far from the main highway.

If one family were to buy all the books that moved across this man's table, it would soon be too much for them. But by a pooling of resources, many families living in the same district can be brought within reach of thousands of books and magazines. For the public library is, after all, just another cooperative service.

HOW RURAL PEOPLE USE LIBRARY BOOKS

These neighbors as well as other rural people turn to books for many reasons. Some are looking for specific information on cooperative marketing, building chicken houses, caring for babies, cooking

¹ The cover photograph is by Billie Glenn: A Tennessee Regional Library Bookmobile in Blount County.

better meals, or repairing tractors. Some because of the news on their radios, hope through books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers, as well as through films and recordings, to get an understanding of the present-day social, economic, and governmental problems which vitally affect the life of everyone. They look for the backgrounds of today's problems in the pages of history and in the biographies of great leaders. Some want to enjoy more understandingly the things around them—the trees, the flowers, and the birds. Others want help in learning things their schooling didn't give them—about history, about interesting people of the past, about strange and far-away places, about science and better ways of living. Some need to keep from being lonely and books can do that, too. A few find inspiration in great poetry and prose. Many turn to good stories for entertainment and relaxation.

New needs for printed materials are always being created by the programs of the agricultural extension service, by radio book clubs, and other educational broadcasts. Farmers' bulletins, pamphlets on current issues, and farm journals meet these needs in part, but they often point to books for further information.

RURAL DISCUSSION GROUPS

Rural forums to discuss social change and farm problems, organized in many places, are creating an additional need for reading materials in the country. These discussions introduce a subject, but books as well as bulletins are needed to drive the points home. "Reciprocal trade agreements as they affect the farmer," or "Crop insurance," for instance, are more clearly understood when the discussion is followed up with reading.

Long-distance service is used in some communities where farm families have no local library service. A farmer or his family writes to the State library extension agency at the State capital to have books mailed to him (fig. 1). When he has finished with the books he sends them back, the only cost to him being the postage. Although this service, which most States give, is a great help, it does not take the place of having a good supply of books near at hand. A reader is much more likely to find the right information if he has a chance to look the books over himself and select the ones that just fit his need, with the help of a librarian who knows exactly what the discussion group wants.

Rural discussion groups in many counties across the country use the bookmobile service, which brings books, if not to the farmer's door, at least to a nearby crossroads deposit station. The farmers' library service is not very different from their city cousins' when their rural villages and towns are equipped with branches that are constantly getting books from a headquarters library, and when the bookmobile is on the country roads 5 days a week, stopping at schools, farmhouses, grocery stores, and lending books to the people along the roads.

Granges, Farm Bureaus, the Farmers Union, and other rural organizations have formed their own discussion groups. One launched its

program by discussing the book *Pleasant Valley* by Louis Bromfield, and went on to read and study other books and materials about conservation and what it means to the farmers and the world. They read *Our Plundered Planet* by Fairfield Osborn, and *Road to Survival* by William Vogt. The county library supplied the books.



FIGURE 1.—Collections of books being prepared at the Illinois State Library, Springfield, for loan to individuals, schools, clubs, and other organizations, as well as to local libraries.

HOME AND FAMILY LIVING

Farm families, like others, are seeking library books for their own particular problems. Many parents want help in bringing up their children (fig. 2). They want good entertainment for them and they study books on child development, care, and training, and on child psychology and family relations.

Farm women in home demonstration groups in many States, for instance, study family living and the training of children. Thousands of library books have found their way from bookmobiles to the hands of farm mothers who are anxious to understand better their 15-year-old sons and daughters, or to give their new-born babies the best of care.

Some parent-education classes meet in the branch building of their county or regional library, where they often enrich their program by including a library film, perhaps "The First Five Years of the Child's Life" or another like "The Feeling of Rejection." Branch librarians in these communities say that all of their books about the psychology of children and adolescents, and similar books, are in use all the time.

WHAT TO READ

Many people welcome suggestions on what to read. City and country people alike clip out the list of "best-sellers" or jot down the names of books they hear mentioned on the radio, not because they are sure they will like these books, but because they like to have something definite to ask for. Those who have a library service near at hand have a much better chance to get suggestions that are streamlined to fit their purposes. Most people who have tried it find that whether they are reading for fun or reading for profit, they get more out of their reading if they use "guideposts" to help them to read in a purpose-

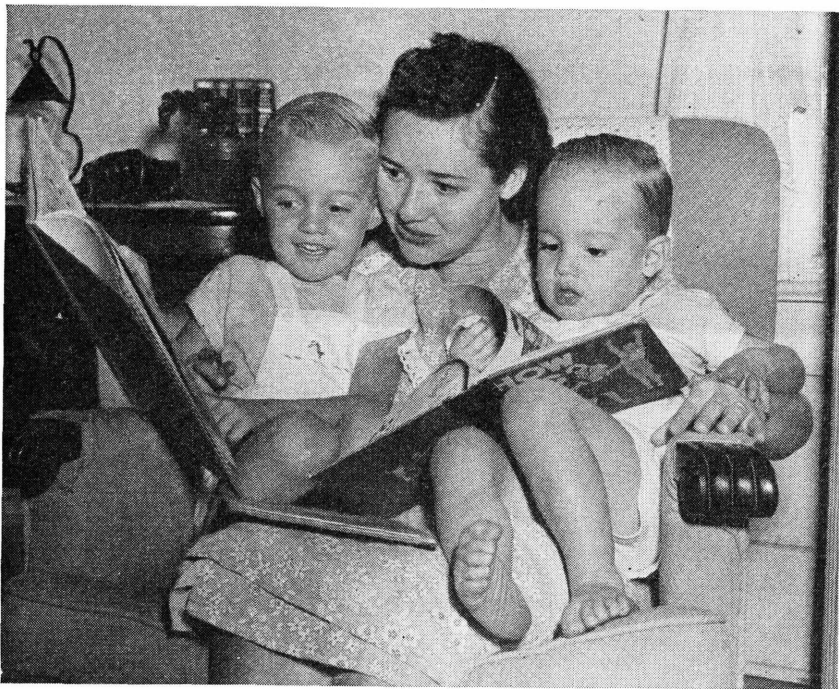


FIGURE 2.—A Georgia mother, in one of the three counties served regularly by the Athens Regional Library Bookmobile, introduces enchanting book friends to her children.

ful way. One man who had read *Drums Along the Mohawk* for the pure adventure and enjoyment of it was glad to be directed to *Oliver Wiswell* which was just as thrilling, but which gave him an entirely different picture of the American Revolution. More suggestions followed; he found that, though he was still reading for fun, he had added greatly to his own knowledge of a period of our history. Rural people who come to know either the bookmobile librarian or the librarian in the village library value their reading guidance as much as they do the actual books themselves.

For the many rural people who do not yet have local library service, State extension librarians and State Home Demonstration Leaders often cooperate in preparing and distributing reading lists on many



FIGURE 3.—The Murray State Teachers College Regional Library in Kentucky works closely with local Homemakers' clubs. These demonstrations and discussions are followed by reading and study.

subjects. When a Home Demonstration Club decides on several subjects the club sends to the State library for the books (fig. 3). This is one of the best ways to get suggestions on what to read when there is no local library service nearby.

RURAL ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Rural organizations, like the Farm Bureau, the Farmers' Union, and the National Grange, want books, magazines, plays, and sometimes pictures, phonograph records, and films for use in planning and putting on their programs. Such materials, together with help in program planning, are available in the areas that are served by good rural libraries. Frequently the homes or offices of officers of rural organizations and agencies are used as lending centers for the library.

BROADENING THE PROGRAM OF RURAL SCHOOLS

Rural children and their teachers use books eagerly where they are available and even preschool children are interested in certain kinds of books. But library shelves in many rural schools today are just about as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Library books apparently were not so necessary when the three R's were likely to be the sum total of the teaching. But with progressive methods of teaching, youngsters need—not just one geography textbook—but five or six



FIGURE 4.—Even preschool tots come to the King County (Washington) book-mobile to select and talk about the picture books.

related books. They need half a dozen histories and dozens of supplementary books for other subjects—not to own themselves, of course, but to borrow from the library (fig. 4 and fig. 5).

The lesson in the up-to-date rural school is quite different from the lesson of some years ago. The teacher does not say, "the lesson for tomorrow will be pages 27 to 35." Instead she tells the pupils to scurry around among library books and read all they can find about,

say, the Cherokee Indians, or the Rocky Mountains, or the Mayflower. Lessons like these make youngsters more independent in their thinking and more self-reliant in their ability to find information for themselves in later years. When they are fortunate enough to be taught by teachers using these new methods, they are glad when the bell rings in the morning and sorry when the time comes to leave in the afternoon.

When young people really get interested in a subject, there is no end to the time and effort they will spend in reading and gathering information (fig. 6 and fig. 7). Here is an average boy who did not care whether he studied his geography lesson or not. Then one day he

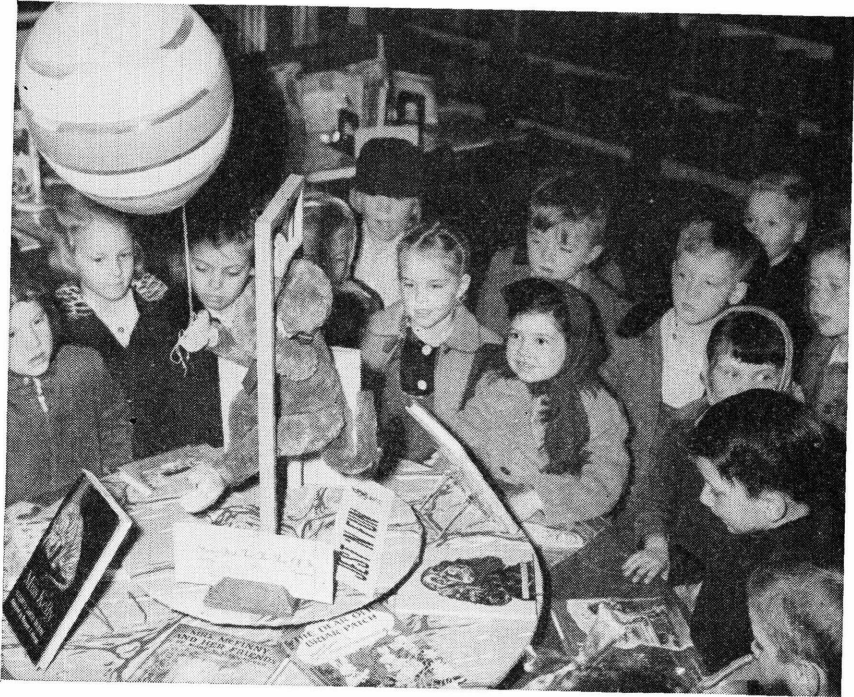


FIGURE 5.—Children from the surrounding country gather around the Book Week Exhibit at Petoskey, Mich.

happened on a book about stamps of all nations, in the school library. He found it so interesting that he began to collect stamps. In a few months he was led to an intense interest in geography by the round-about route of stamp collecting. When teachers and librarians are skillful enough to put the right book into the hands of the right child at the right time, wonders can be accomplished.

These newer methods of teaching through using many books have greatly broadened the child's mental horizon, made him more independent in the use of books, and increased his ability to read fast. The child who has learned to be familiar with many books and to glean information quickly from the printed page is usually far ahead of any fellow pupils who are not accustomed to such reading habits.

Of course, before this kind of teaching can be done, the library books must be available. City boys and girls usually find a well-equipped branch of the city library within a few blocks of their homes or a good school library in their school. Many rural children do not yet have this advantage.

In several hundred rural areas in the United States, however, regional or county library service has been set up. The rural school has its own branch library, or the bookmobile travels around the country leaving new books for the boys and girls and taking back those they have read. Well-equipped libraries of this kind can also lend pictures, phonograph records, 16-mm. films, pamphlets, magazines,



FIGURE 6.—For progressive methods of teaching in rural schools, books and materials of many kinds are used.

and maps. In this kind of library service the cost is divided and the benefits multiplied by the number of schools included in the service.

In one California county, where books are circulated among the rural schools in this way, the pupils have become great home readers. In a 1-teacher school with 23 pupils in 8 grades a record was kept of the children's reading. These boys and girls had read all the way from 11 books to 42 each, in 1 year. It has been proved that children who get the reading habit progress faster in their studies than others who do not.

A visit of a bookmobile to a rural school is a stimulating sight. The pupils troop out of the building with books piled high on their arms, looking eagerly for the new books filling the shelves of the "library

on wheels." They look over the inviting volumes. There are *Aztec Hunters*, *Snake Gold*, *The Story of Mexico*, *The Boy's King Arthur*, *Ferdinand*, *Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates*, and *Little Women*. There are hero stories, stories of adventure, history, and poetry, travel.



FIGURE 7.—Youngsters make full use of book collections once their interest is aroused, especially if there is a librarian on hand to help them.

To the rural school teacher this visit of the bookmobile from the county or regional library is a first aid and a great stimulant. With all of these new books supplementing the school texts, the classes are enlivened, and the whole educational process is made more effective.

A Vermont teacher in a rural school tells of her experience when the school was given regional library service some time ago.

The books that I found in the school equipment were old and few. There was no material whatsoever with which to teach social studies. I decided to try the project method and asked the regional librarian for help in selecting library material. My first project on the Scandinavian countries was a grand success. The librarian sent me everything imaginable—a project manual, folk-dance books, copies of the National Geographic Magazine, fascinating books on Norse folklore from the illustrations of which we got suggestions for making posters and note-book covers. The project which was to have covered a month lasted almost two, our material being so extensive as to enable my class to develop more phases of the problem than had originally been planned. We are soon to begin another such project. I am sure it will be equally successful and enjoyable, as I have great confidence in our regional librarian.

The book truck from Logansport, Ind., on just one of its trips to the Jefferson Township Schools, a consolidated school in Cass County, with about 200 children in the first 8 grades, lent 213 books.

But how can rural schools afford to pay for this influx of books to aid the modern methods of teaching? For each school to buy all of the books would be expensive, but where county or regional library service is begun the books are shared by many schools, and the cost is spread over the whole area.

SELF-EDUCATION

To satisfy the great urge to continue one's education when school days are over and to accomplish what is sometimes called self-education, is hardly possible today without books. The man or woman who has been keeping up with the swiftly changing times through his reading of books, magazines, and bulletins, may be actually ahead of the one who, though he may have had a better formal education, has dropped his reading habits and has become rusty.

Many whose education was interrupted by circumstances in their homes—people who were not able to go as far up the educational ladder as they wished—are now recognizing that it is never too late to learn. Some of these "late-learners" are accomplishing wonders with the help of library guidance (fig. 8).

Some libraries have outlined special courses to fit the needs of just such individuals. A librarian makes a list of reliable and readable books and magazine articles on the particular subject in which they are interested, whether it be raising squabs, handicrafts, parliamentary law, American history, civil service, or world peace. Some may want added information on hobbies like Indian relics, patchwork quilts, or ship models.

This book list is like a reading prescription, starting the individual where he is and leading him on to a broader knowledge of the subject. Where there is no county or regional library the guidance is sometimes available from the State library agency. Lists on topics ranging from boilermaking to block printing, from the manufacture of ice cream to music appreciation, and from tapestry to taxidermy have been prepared by the Oregon State Library. This service was begun during the depression to help young people to continue their education when they were forced to leave school. It grew, and the scope was broadened to include anyone interested in self-education.

Here is a sample of one of the requests that came in from a rural correspondent of a newspaper, who wanted to improve his way of writing:

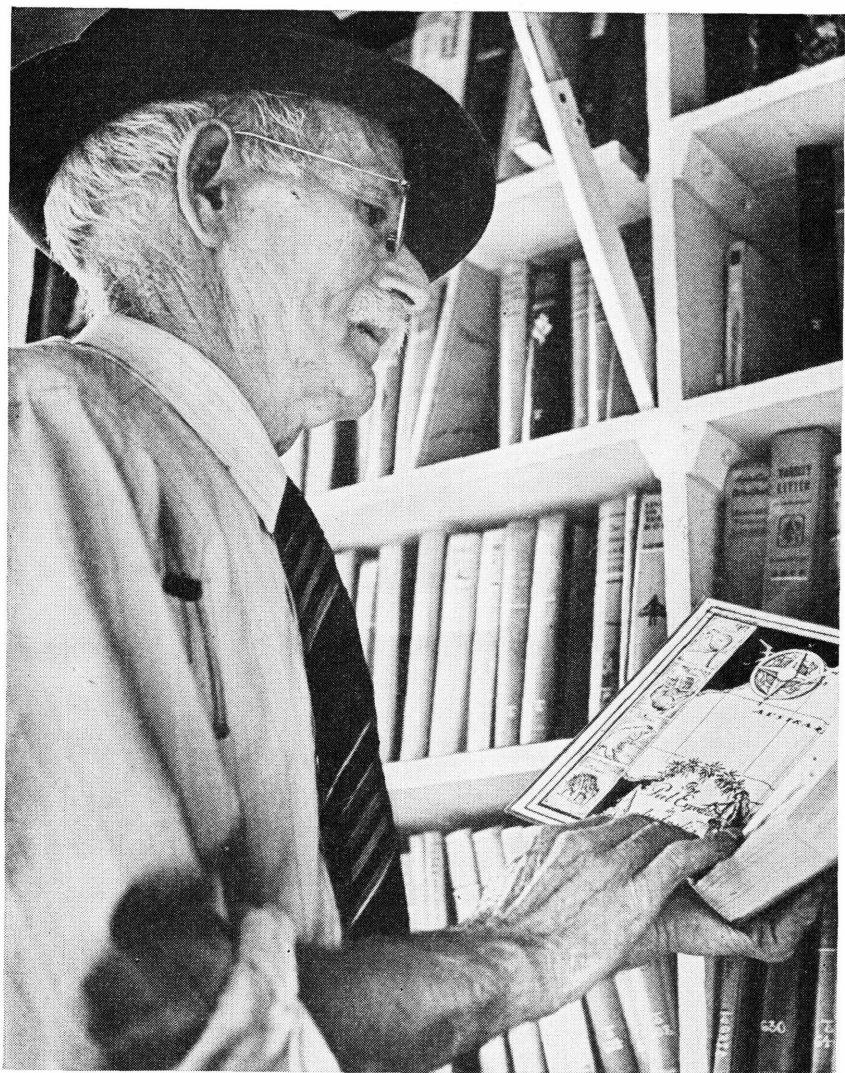


FIGURE 8.—A “late learner” chooses his reading from the bookmobile at Philadelphia, Tenn., and selects books for the local book deposit to be read by many of the community people.

Will you please outline a simple course in journalism for me? I am also interested in magazine articles and feature writing. I would particularly like a book which would give me some idea as to what one needs to improve one's writing ability. The rest I leave with you. I believe this is the fourth reading course I am taking from the State library. I have had a lot of enjoyment as well as profit from the courses.

Sometimes a book starts a hobby that winds up in being a profitable side line. During the lean years of the depression more than a few farmers got ideas from books which started them in work.

A man interested in furniture began to renovate old chairs, from directions in books, in his spare time, but the hobby became so profita-

ble that he is starting a repair shop at home. First, he asked for books on repairing chairs, then on upholstering, and on finishing woods. He finally rounded out his information by getting books on painting and the use of spray guns.

A farmer wanted and found information on home building (fig. 9). Another farmer killed a calf and found the hide so attractive that he wanted to preserve it. He asked for books on tanning. Now

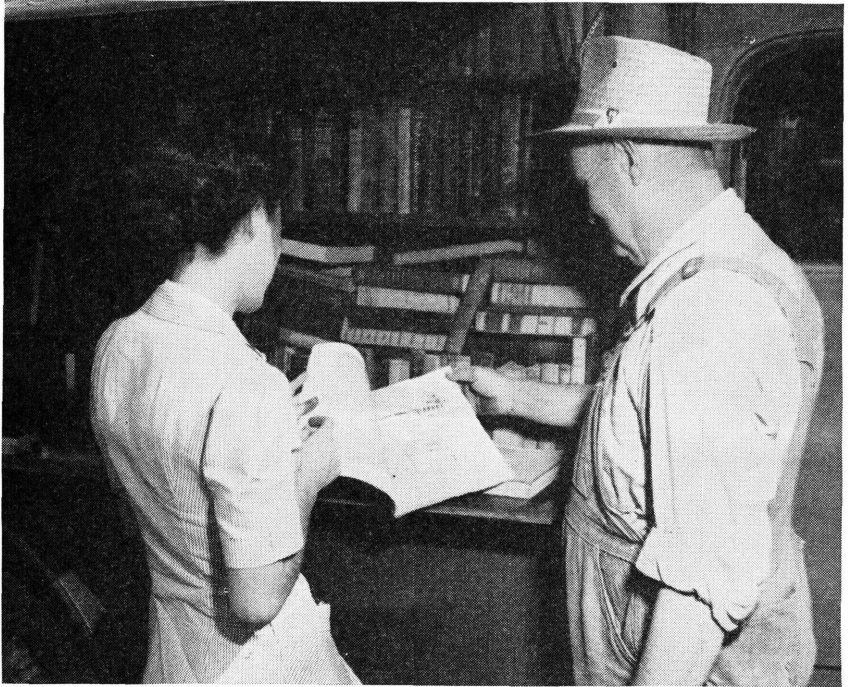


FIGURE 9.—An Alabama farmer at the Montgomery County bookmobile asks for and gets information on home building.

he tans hides to make all the leather needed to mend his harness. He even found an opening in an adjoining State for supplying hides for making book covers. He estimates that the books lent him by the Louisiana State Library, including the expensive technical ones, saved or earned for him about \$200 a year.

Reading courses have been prepared by the Oregon State Library for literally thousands of students who are eager to continue along a special line. Some of the books have gone to young people yet to make their start, others to farmers and their wives living in isolated places. Many requests have come for reading prescriptions or courses on technical subjects, such as Diesel engines and radio.

READING GUIDANCE NEAR AT HAND

More personal and informal guidance is given by the county or regional librarian who visits branch libraries and stations or travels

with the bookmobile. Just glimpse for a minute a stop made by a bookmobile in northern Louisiana on a warm spring day.

A farm woman stood shading her eyes as she watched the bookmobile coming out of a whirl of dust down the road. When it swung into her farmyard she hurried up to the open shelves at the side of the library on wheels and looked over the titles: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' *Cross Creek*, Conrad Richter's *The Trees*, Pearl Buck's *Peony*. There were books on orcharding and tomato growing, fiction, biographies. Finally, with sparkling eyes she reached for a thin volume and turned to the librarian.

"I'd like this one on gardening," she said, "I'm going to put in my seed next week, and this may give me some ideas."



FIGURE 10.—Rain does not deter this Washington bookmobile driver, nor the people waiting for the books.

"Of course," answered the librarian who always goes with the bookmobile driver on these trips through the cut-over pine country back in the red-clay hills where farmers live far apart. "How did you like the book on furniture repairing you checked out 2 weeks ago?" "Oh, it was just the thing. I got some good hints on fixing the chair backs and repairing the couch, too."

This woman never misses the visit of the bookmobile. She has talked over with the librarian her chicken raising, bringing up her children, her flower gardening, and other questions. There was always a book for each problem.

If bookmobiles, their librarian-drivers, and the readers ignore heat and sun, so do they ignore the rain, ice, and snow (fig. 10). In

northern Georgia a jeep is used to ford mountain streams so that library service may be taken to remote sections of this mountainous area (fig. 11).

In the United States there are today approximately 800 counties out of some 3,000, where library service has become an actuality for



FIGURE 11.—Librarians in the Towns-Union Regional Library (Georgia) use a jeep to ford mountain streams as they take library service to remote localities.

rural people. In these counties rural folks have books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, and other reading material in the same abundance that city folks have. They have good books of fiction for evenings. They have books on the agricultural questions that are

puzzling the farmers. They have books on hobbies, vocations, health, history, politics, and biography (fig. 12). They have books for their children at school. They have books on family life to help solve the difficulties that arise. They have access to books on every possible subject from painting the barn to the advantages of a democratic form of government and the value of the Bill of Rights.

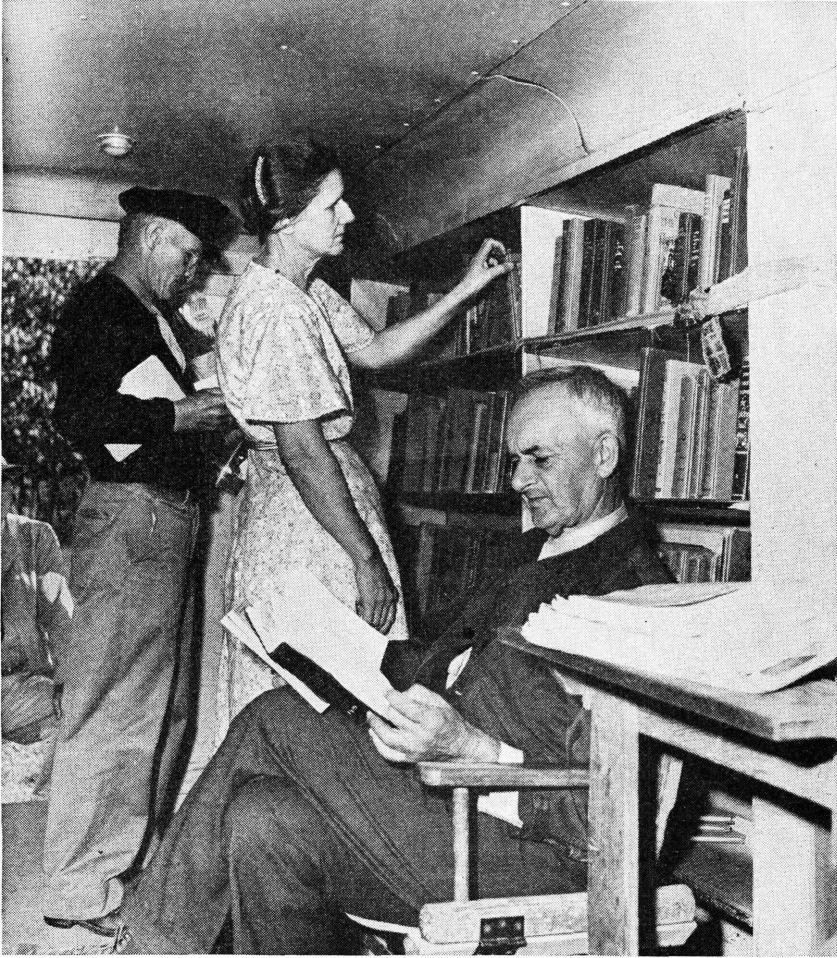


FIGURE 12.—Patrons from the Czech settlement at Kolin, La., gather inside the bookmobile to select materials on agriculture, economic problems, and world affairs.

Farmers in these favored areas are finding out that books and library service not only help them to improve agricultural methods but also to keep abreast of current and changing economic, social, and political problems, so that they can take their share in the wise shaping of present and future policies.

LIBRARY SERVICE OVER WIDE AREAS

Rural people who are getting the best in library service today are those who live in areas that are served by county or regional libraries. A region, in the library sense, may be one large county, or several adjacent counties, or even a geographic or trade area. But whatever the type of area, the service is practically the same.

WHAT REGIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE IS

In a county or regional library system, books are taken to the remotest parts of the region from a headquarters library, which serves



FIGURE 13.—This bookmobile reaches remote farm homes where small book collections are deposited for the use of this family and their neighbors. (Photograph by Mrs. Ella K. Magee, Staff, Louisiana State Library.)

as a main reservoir. Books are distributed through branch libraries in community centers; through service stations at convenient points like crossroads stores, schools, and homes (fig. 13); and often by a bookmobile or library on wheels. The smaller lending collections in farm areas are frequently exchanged—the books that have been read in one station go on to another. Whatever the methods used, the object is to put books and other reading materials within easy reach of every citizen.

Branch libraries in towns and villages have their own reading rooms and reference collections like a separate town library, but unlike the separate town library, they can draw on the resources of the large regional book collection and on the advice and help of the experienced

and especially trained regional librarian. The existing town libraries in a section where county or regional service is established, find that they do well to affiliate with it, to get access to its larger resources and specialized services (fig. 14).

The good county or regional library can afford to have a trained and experienced librarian to organize and administer the service. In the many communities throughout the section where there are book-lending stations, however, local workers serve as custodians, and in this way a close touch with the interests and needs of the local borrowers is possible. The regional librarian makes frequent visits to branches and



FIGURE 14.—Substantial and well-read borrowers from Rochester Town Library in Vermont extend their reading by using the regional library service of the State.

stations and travels with the bookmobile if one is used. He or she gives the local workers any help they need and talks directly with rural readers, fitting the reading materials into the programs and projects of rural organizations (fig. 15). Some county libraries carry books to hospitals (fig. 16).

OPEN CHANNEL TO SPECIALIZED SERVICES

The independent village or town library, or even the very small county library, usually has such limited funds that its book collection quickly becomes stale. But its readers may want books on any one of a hundred subjects—books that a large library easily supplies at much less cost to the individual taxpayer. Not only can the community book



FIGURE 15.—In Cole County in Missouri, the librarian visits the Happy Hour Community Club Library and brings a fresh supply of books for the neighbors.



FIGURE 16.—Hospital library service is a regular feature of the Haywood County Library in North Carolina.

collections that are part of a larger regional system be kept fresh by frequent exchanges, but any book in the system can be supplied on demand. A postal or telephone request to the headquarters library may bring it by mail or it may be delivered by the bookmobile on its next trip.

Just as the regional library provides a much wider choice of books, so it helps to provide a wider range of specialized services. The small independent village or town library can rarely afford a librarian who is especially trained to work with children, or a person prepared to work with schools. Maps, posters, and gay pictures are available to brighten the geography class and to show the children how others live. The regional system makes such services a practical reality.

This, too, is the age of the film and the record, of the magazine and the pamphlet (fig. 17). Just the film needed to drive home a point



FIGURE 17.—Not by books alone do libraries serve their readers today. Books, pamphlets, and magazines are now supplemented by recordings, film strips, and 16-mm films. (Courtesy Virginia Clarke, Librarian Demonstration School, North Texas State College, Texas.)

about a community health problem, suitable recordings for the music appreciation class, or something lighter for that Saturday night party, are usually beyond the means of the rural dweller unless some cooperative plan for owning such materials is worked out. A regional library makes it possible to share not only books but the services of librarians with special training who, with their films and their recordings, their talent for story-telling, and their knowledge of school needs, can help to give a deeper meaning to the ideas found in books (fig. 18).

REGIONAL SERVICE WORKS WELL

Cooperative library service over wide areas is not a new idea. County libraries were established as early as 1900, and about 800

counties are now served by county or regional library systems. They are scattered over 42 States, covering all parts of the country from California to New Jersey and from Minnesota to Louisiana (fig. 19).



FIGURE 18.—Michigan children gather at each stop of the Branch County Library bookmobile to hear their favorite stories on records.

OVER 35,000,000 RURAL AMERICANS UNSERVED

Yet in spite of this good start there are still more than 35,000,000 rural people in the United States who do not have easy access to permanent public library service. Some of these people use neighboring city or town libraries, usually on the payment of an annual fee, since they

do not help provide the public funds that support the service. Some borrow books by mail from their State library agencies, paying the postage one or both ways. But it is one thing to drive to town for books or to sit down and write a letter to your State library agency and quite another to choose your books when you are doing an errand



FIGURE 19.—This small branch library in Louisiana is open and ready to do business with the full resources of the Iberia Parish Library to back it up. (Courtesy, Mrs. Ella K. Magee, Staff, Louisiana State Library.)

at your crossroads store or from a bookmobile that stops near your home (fig. 20 and fig. 21). Our democratic ideal of equal educational opportunity for all cannot be fully realized until this easy access to reading materials and reading guidance is available to all citizens—rural as well as urban.



FIGURE 20.—This bookmobile stops with its book collection at a housing project in California.



FIGURE 21.—Wherever this bookmobile stops in Georgia, an outdoor story hour is sure to take place.

HOW MODERN RURAL LIBRARIES ARE STARTED

The next question is, How can farm families get these services? Fortunately the regional library service plan is flexible and can be adapted to meet local conditions. The selection of a satisfactory region will depend on circumstances. Where the population is large enough and the resources are adequate, the county has proved to be a satisfactory unit for library service, but where counties are small in population and wealth, several may need to join together in order to make available a high type of service. This combination of adjacent counties is now possible under the laws of most States. Some experiments in service to geographic and trade areas are now under way.

THE STATE APPROACH

Planning for the State as a whole is important, says the American Library Association. This may result in dividing the State into a few large regions suitable for library service. This newer approach assures complete coverage and should be based on a careful mapping of the region. Establishment of libraries by a restricted local initiative may be haphazard—a community that has adequate means and more-than-average leadership establishes a library, whereas neighboring communities that need the service as much or more go without.

In some areas, this spotty pattern of library service has already developed with unfortunate results. To offset this situation, many States have laws which permit counties without libraries to contract for library service with neighboring counties whose service is already established. Local control of the administration can be maintained in this arrangement and the contract can be drawn up to the advantage of both counties.

Another type of State approach is for the State library extension agency to set up regional branches with State funds, supplemented from local sources. In small or sparsely populated States this seems a logical method. In Vermont, for instance, the State library extension agency is coordinating the services of the many existing small libraries through five regional centers. Each regional librarian, with her bookmobile, travels over regular routes and makes stops at stated times. The local librarians draw on this service to fill the widely varied needs of their borrowers. When a patron asks for a book that is not in the local collection, the librarian writes or telephones to the regional center and has it brought out on the next bookmobile trip. Massachusetts, Illinois, and New Hampshire have similar programs of service.

COOPERATION WITH ANOTHER AGENCY

Regional libraries may be established through cooperation with other agencies that are interested in rural betterment. Such libraries have been developed in cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority through contracts between counties and established libraries. One of these regional libraries covers two counties in northeastern Alabama, and another covers three counties developed from one county in southwestern North Carolina. What has been done by the TVA

might be used as a guide by other agencies that are working to equalize educational facilities.

Another type of regional library service was begun when a local group of fishermen in Nova Scotia became seriously interested in understanding how the fishing industry fitted into the economy of their area. Each fisherman, long past the stage of regular schooling, found that he had to learn a good deal about the workings of the economic system before he could make plans with his fellow fishermen to stabilize the local fishing industry. He could not do this without books. Thus a carefully selected and much used library became the hub of a community betterment program.

In Michigan, in a similar way, five communities taking part in a School-Community Service program dedicated to the enriching of rural life, are turning their attention to unmet needs in their communities. Some of them, finding their library service to be deficient, succeeded in bringing village, township, and county boards together in cooperative action to improve library service for all concerned.

LOCAL ACTION

Appropriate local action has been outlined by the American Library Association. In brief, it says a single county can decide whether it wishes to have county-wide library service, or several adjacent counties can unite in setting up a regional library, according to the provisions of library laws in most States. These laws differ in detail. The county board takes the action in some States, whereas a popular vote is needed in others. Citizens who want to have county library service can get help from the State library extension agency about the library laws in the State, and advice concerning the particular kind of organization most suited to local conditions. When a county or regional library is established, the county authorities often appoint a library board composed of interested citizens who serve without pay and who are responsible for the expenditure of library funds and for employing a librarian to organize and administer the service. Or the county may enter into a contract for county-wide service with a good library already established in the area or with an adjacent county library. Two examples are the California counties—Mariposa, which receives service from Merced County Library, and Sierra, which has contracted with the Plumas County Library.

LIBRARY DEMONSTRATIONS

Informal library service to rural areas was provided in many States by the Work Projects Administration and National Youth Administration workers, paid from Federal funds. Many of these projects served as successful demonstrations and have led to the establishment of permanent service especially where they were planned and supervised by experienced librarians or by well-advised leaders. Among those considered most successful were the library services sponsored on a State basis, for they benefited by the guidance of State library authorities who made them part of the plans for developing State-wide library service. The book collections of the State library agencies were also used generously in these activities.

Another important contribution to their success was active interest and support among the citizens. The time and energy spent by these lay organizations in arousing public interest and in obtaining funds for books, had much to do with the establishment in several of the counties of permanent county library service—the ultimate goal of these experiments. From the beginning, many county authorities were asked to contribute toward the purchase of books and equipment, paving the way for permanent support (fig. 22).

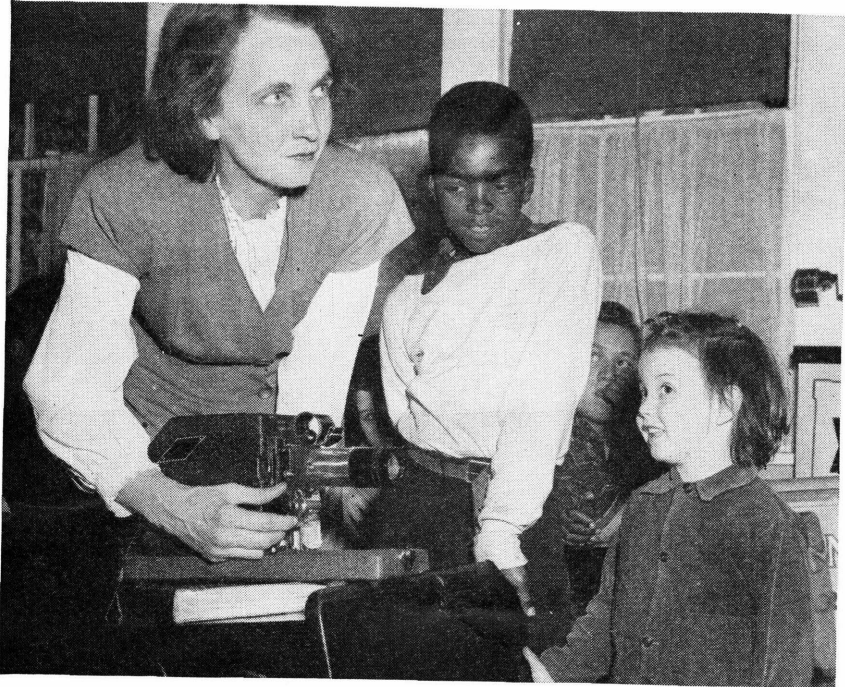


FIGURE 22.—Film strips bring new meaning to the school's program. The Cass County librarian makes lessons come alive for some of Michigan's school children.

State-supported demonstrations, as they are called, are in evidence in Louisiana today. They are a continuation of the earlier program made possible by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

A Public Library Service Demonstration Bill introduced in the 81st Congress (S. 130—H. R. 874) proposed the use of Federal funds for library demonstrations in the States. Under the provisions of this bill, the demonstrations would be administered by the State library extension agencies, following the approval of individual State plans by the United States Commissioner of Education.

FINANCING RURAL LIBRARY SERVICE

When rural people establish library service, they want it to be a service of good quality. This implies public support for libraries just as public support is provided for schools. The American Li-

brary Association has adopted Standards for Public Libraries which recommend a minimum annual income of \$1.50 per person for libraries serving a population of 25,000 or more. For what it considers reasonably good service \$2.25 per person is recommended and for superior service \$3 per person. It says that counties having a smaller population will usually find it better to combine with others to make a region large enough for effective service. Money may actually be wasted by setting up service for too small a number of people, for poor service is not worth the expenditure of public funds. If a small beginning is made, plans can be worked out to obtain more adequate funds as soon as the service has proved its value. The



FIGURE 23.—In the bayous of Louisiana the rowboat meets the bookmobile half-way.

county authorities will determine the appropriation each year (according to detailed provisions of the State law) and will be responsive to public opinion.

STATE AID

In general the States recognize that all their citizens have an obligation in financing aid for schools, roads, agricultural extension, workmen's compensation, social security, and similar functions of State-wide concern. Fundamental to State aid, says the American Library Association, is the fact that there is great economic inequality between different sections of the State, particularly between urban and rural areas. The increasing trend of revenues away from local to State treasuries intensifies the need for State assistance (fig. 23).

There is a growing movement, therefore, in many parts of the country, toward larger State grants for the development of county and regional library service. Twenty-six States now provide such aid to new or existing libraries. The specific State-aid laws and regulations, the types of appropriations made, and the ways in which library service is developed vary in the different States, but the results in bringing more books and reading guidance to rural people are the same.

As concrete evidence of the influence of State-aid grants upon the establishment of rural libraries, in the 26 States that receive such grants, 600 counties now have library service in contrast with less than 200 counties before the advent of State aid. Several States, thus far without a State-aid-to-libraries program, have adopted State aid as a definite part of their library planning and are working to obtain it.

FEDERAL AID

The Federal Government has indicated in various ways that it has a concern in the education of its citizens. Active Federal interest has been shown in various adult-education projects under the supervision of the Federal Security Agency. Two examples of interest to rural people are given. (1) Far more than a million people were enrolled in the federally aided vocational education classes in the year 1945-46. There was particular emphasis on homemaking and family-life education as a cooperative responsibility of the schools and other community groups, as well as offerings in agriculture and trade subjects. (2) During the last 2 years, with financial assistance from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Federal Security Agency, through its Office of Education, has been conducting a special project for adult education of Negroes which is concerned particularly with the functionally illiterate. Many educational institutions and organizations are cooperating in this work.

The American Library Association has expressed its belief that Federal interest in adult education is desirable. "A national program of action in the improvement of public library service can be achieved only by the joint efforts of local, State, and Federal Governments. 'The final result should be a cooperative partnership in library development in which the Federal Government shares responsibility with the States and the local units'." This summary statement appears in *A National Plan for Public Library Service*, published by the American Library Association in 1948.

LEADERSHIP IN LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

Intelligent direction is essential to the development of adequate library facilities. Leadership on the State level is particularly important since legal provisions are made by the State, and economic and social conditions within a State influence all social and educational progress.

THE STATE LIBRARY EXTENSION AGENCY

The State library extension agency takes the lead in library development within the State. Whatever its particular form, it is an official, State-supported agency, charged with the responsibility for

developing adequate local public library service for every citizen. It may be a State library, library department, library commission, or a library division of the State department of education. But whatever it is called, it is the first place to turn to for help in library establishment or in improving existing facilities. A list of the State agencies will be found on page 31. The State library agency plans and works for good library legislation as a basis for library establishment; it administers State-aid funds where they are available and directs campaigns to obtain such aid in States where it is needed. The State library associations are also working for the development and improvement of library service throughout their States. Most of them have State planning committees which have worked out practical plans for good State-wide library service.

The State library agency bridges the gap until good local library service is available, by lending collections of books to communities and schools or a few books at a time by mail directly to individuals. As fast as county or regional libraries are established, the State agency devotes itself to supplying unusual books which, because the demand is only occasional, the county or regional library does not feel justified in buying. In some States material for study, debate, and club use is also available from the extension division of the State university.

NATIONAL LIBRARY AGENCIES

Individuals, local libraries, and State library extension agencies will be particularly interested in help available from national agencies. A Service to Libraries Section in the Office of Education of the Federal Security Agency, Washington, D. C., which began operation in 1938, is increasingly important as its service develops. The service consists of research, statistical, bibliographic, consultative, and information activities and extends to public libraries and school, college, and university libraries. The pending legislation proposes that the administration of the public library demonstrations as they are called, at the Federal level, would be centered in the Federal Security Agency.

The American Library Association (50 East Huron Street, Chicago 11) with a membership of 19,000 is the national organization of libraries, librarians, library board members, and friends of libraries. It works with State library extension agencies and also gives general advice and information on library establishment and desirable types of rural library service and State aid. It operates through its staff, publications, conferences, and its relations with other national agencies and governmental bodies.

CITIZEN GROUPS

Citizen interest and action in improving and extending library service are of primary importance since library service belongs to the citizens and is set up to serve them. This interest is illustrated most strikingly, perhaps, by more than 35,000 men and women who serve without compensation on the boards of more than 7,500 public libraries in the United States.

This interest is by no means confined to library board members. Through individuals and through organized groups it has expressed

itself in various ways through the years. The individual citizen can do much to promote understanding of the library and to build good will. The newspaper editor, the citizen who writes to the contributors' column in the newspaper, the individual who shows himself friendly to the library project, and the person who uses the library service (fig. 24), all can be helpful.

Informal organized support of libraries is also not new in the American scene. Many public libraries had their beginnings through the activities and energy of mechanics' institutes or women's clubs. In many communities groups of men and women, organized primarily for other purposes, have been instrumental in obtaining special tax levies for libraries, increased appropriations, bond issues for new



FIGURE 24.—A rural deposit station at Iroquois, Ill. where customers can get their books and their groceries at the same time.

buildings, or better library legislation. Such organizations include women's clubs, service clubs, parent-teacher associations, farm organizations, voters' leagues, unions, and many more. Librarians and library board members work closely with these groups and are frequently identified with one or more of them as individual members. Greatly increased cooperation is stimulated and fostered because their contribution to the advancement of libraries can be very great.

Finally, there are the Friends of the Library—groups organized more specifically to become acquainted with the services of libraries and to help interpret their program to their communities. Such groups have grown out of the realization that libraries and library board members *alone* cannot perform the common task of making the library a real educational force. In addition to local Friends of the Library groups, variously named, some groups of citizens interested

in library service are organized on a State-wide basis. There are at least 16 such State groups in our country today and their expressed concern is primarily for better library legislation, the development of strong State library agencies, and the extension of library service throughout their States.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

FOR A COUNTY OR REGIONAL LIBRARY

A county or regional library movement may spring from the interest of one person or one organization. From this small beginning must come interest and action by all kinds of people in all parts of the county or region, and by many organizations. Here are some of the steps as outlined by the American Library Association:

(1) *Write to the State Library Extension Agency at the State Capital.* Find out about the laws under which a library can be established in your State. Find out about the particular type of library service that would best fit your county or region.

(2) *Talk to other people you think would be interested.* See that the farmers, businessmen, school officials, housewives, friends, and neighbors are well informed about the proposal and understand the details of the library project. To be successful it must be a real citizen's movement. Among those to be consulted at the beginning are the county superintendent of schools and his supervising teachers, the county agricultural agent and county home demonstration agent, county commission board members, and representatives of such civic organizations as community clubs, men's clubs, veterans' organizations, cooperatives, women's clubs, and farm organizations active in the county, the Grange, Farm Bureau, and the Farmers' Union.

(3) *Organize an active committee from the whole county or region.* The committee must have an alert chairman and include men and women representative of all interests and groups. In the early stages of the campaign they should see newspaper editors and use the radio. But they should keep in mind the value of person-to-person discussion and not depend alone on the newspapers and the radio. Printed material, such as an attractively printed leaflet or folder on the county library plan, should be available for distribution. The committee should hold frequent meetings at which plans can be made for local community programs on this subject.

(4) *Invite a worker from the State Library Extension Agency to a county or regional meeting.* People will have done enough thinking about the county or regional library by this time that they can begin asking more specific questions about how it really would work and how much it will cost. The State worker can also discuss library needs and the legal organization of the county or regional library.

(5) *When all the steps have been taken to inform people, draw up a definite plan for an appropriation with the officials of the county or region.* Before approaching the county board of commissioners with this request you should be ready to answer the questions they will probably ask. They are faced with budget requests from many groups and cannot adequately evaluate the library's needs unless convincing explanations are offered. It may be advisable to visit the individual members in advance to explain just what you want and why, for money is always scarce and there never seems to be a "good" year.

(6) *Obtain formal action on the plan by the necessary governing body.* The committee must "sell the idea" for the county or regional library before the request for its establishment is presented officially. The American Library Association advises that the budget request be adequate to provide at least one capable trained librarian and one assistant, a reasonable number of books suitable for the particular group to be served, and some practical means of servicing them to all readers in the county or region. It is well not to ask for too little as that is to invite failure of the project. Experience indicates that if you have a good case, you are likely eventually to get what you need, even if it takes several years of effort.

FOR IMMEDIATE BOOK NEEDS

If you have no local community library and until a county or regional library has been developed you may want to—

- (1) Write to your State library extension agency for individual books by mail.
- (2) Ask one of your local organizations to borrow a collection of books (traveling library) from the State library extension agency after you have helped to find a good place for it and a good person to check out the books to the readers.

FOR THE STATE AS A WHOLE

A State organization may help its smaller units get the library service they need by action for the State as a whole. The American Library Association suggests that the State leader or group may—

- (1) Obtain information (by writing to or visiting the State library extension agency) on the State's plan for developing local library service, on the State law that permits the establishment of county or regional libraries, on any State aid available, or on campaign materials for obtaining State aid.
- (2) Report local book needs and interest in library service to the State library extension agency.
- (3) Distribute State agency leaflets on library needs and plans.
- (4) Work with other State groups to strengthen the State library extension agency.
- (5) Cooperate with State library associations in programs to provide or promote more complete library service to all residents of a State.
- (6) Sponsor appropriate legislative action for the development of library service for all the people.

DIRECTORY OF STATE LIBRARY EXTENSION AGENCIES

Alabama Public Library Service Division, Department of Archives and History, 4 Union St., Montgomery.
 Arkansas State Library Commission, 506½ Center Street, Little Rock.
 California State Library, Division of Libraries, Department of Education, Sacramento.
 Colorado State Library, Department of Education, Denver.
 Connecticut Division of Libraries, State Department of Education, Hartford.
 Delaware. Library Commission for the State, Dover.
 Florida State Library Board, Tallahassee.
 Georgia Division of Textbook and Library Service, Department of Education, 92 Mitchell Street, S. W., Atlanta.
 Idaho State Traveling Library, Boise.
 Illinois State Library, Centennial Memorial Building, Springfield.
 Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.
 Iowa State Traveling Library, Historical Building, Des Moines.
 Kansas State Library, Topeka.
 Kentucky Library Extension Division, Department of Library and Archives, Frankfort.
 Louisiana State Library, Baton Rouge.
 Maine State Library, Augusta.
 Maryland Division of Library Extension, Department of Education, 400 Cathedral Street, Baltimore.
 Massachusetts Division of Public Libraries, Department of Education, 200 Newbury Street, Boston.
 Michigan State Library, Lansing.
 Minnesota Library Division, Department of Education, St. Paul.
 Mississippi Library Commission, 535 College Street, Jackson.
 Missouri State Library, Jefferson City.
 Montana State Library Extension Commission, Missoula.
 Nebraska Public Library Commission, Lincoln.
 Nevada State Library, Carson City.
 New Hampshire State Library, 20 Park Street, Concord.

New Jersey Division of the State Library, Archives and History; Department of Education, Trenton.

New Mexico State Library Commission, 301 Don Gasper St., Santa Fe.

New York State Library, State Education Department, Albany.

North Carolina Library Commission, Library Building, Raleigh.

North Dakota State Library Commission, Liberty Memorial Building, Bismarck.

Ohio State Library, Columbus.

Oklahoma Library Commission, Oklahoma City.

Oregon State Library, Salem.

Pennsylvania State Library, Education Building, Harrisburg.

Rhode Island State Library, Providence.

South Carolina State Library Board, 1207 Calhoun Street, Columbia.

South Dakota Free Library Commission, Pierre.

Tennessee Division of Instructional Materials and Library Service, Department of Education, Nashville.

Texas State Library, Austin.

Utah Library Division, Department of Public Instruction, Salt Lake City.

Vermont Free Public Library Commission, Montpelier.

Virginia State Library, Richmond.

Washington State Library, Temple of Justice, Olympia.

West Virginia Library Commission, West Virginia University, Morgantown.

Wisconsin Free Library Commission, Madison.

Wyoming State Library, Cheyenne.

Note: Agencies are located either in the State Capitol (or Statehouse) or in a State office building except as otherwise indicated.

Sir

Monticello May 19. 09.

Your favor of March 19 came to hand but a few days ago and informs me of the establishment of the Westward mill library society, of it's general views & progress, I always hear with pleasure of institutions for the promotion of knowledge among my countrymen. The people of every country are the only safe guardians of their own rights, and are the only instruments which can be used for their destruction. and certainly they would never consent to be so used were they not deceived. to avoid this they should be instructed to a certain degree. I have often thought that nothing would do more extensive good at small expence than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county to consist of a few well chosen books, to be lent to the people of the county under such regulations as would secure their safe return in due time. these should be such as would give them a general view of their history & particular view of that of their own country, a tolerable knowledge of geography, the elements of Natural philosophy of agriculture & mechanics. should your example lead to this, it will do great good. men having had more favorable opportunities than fall to every man's lot of becoming acquainted with the best books on such subjects as might be selected, I do not know that I can be otherwise useful to your society than by offering them any information respecting these which they might wish. my services in this way are freely at their command & I beg leave to tender to yourself my salutations & assurances of respect..

Mr. John Wyche



Facsimile of letter by Thomas Jefferson to John Wyche. The original letter is in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1949

